

Coins

A bore results in a \$5 boon

By Roger Boye

FORTUNATELY for Charles "Bill" Redfern of Galesburg, the television program he was watching one recent evening was a real bore.

"Otherwise, I would never have looked at the \$5 bill my wife had given me," Redfern said. He happened to notice that the two serial numbers on the bill [a series 1974 Federal Reserve note from the Minneapolis district] did not match as they are supposed to. The first three numerals in one serial number were "611," and in the other, "612."

"My wife had just come in from playing bingo, and I always tell her that she has to give me half of what she won. That's when she flipped the \$5 bill my way," Redfern said.

His "mismatched serial number" \$5 bill is an unusual collector's item. The serial number appears twice on the front side of all United States currency currently printed, and the two numbers [each with eight numerals and usually two letters] are supposed to be identical. The error results because numbering devices on the equipment that prints currency are set incorrectly.

The most common bills with mismatched serial numbers are \$1 silver certificates made in the late 1950s and the 1960s.

Coin dealers sell those \$1 bills for about \$30 in extremely fine condition, and as much as \$45 uncirculated.

Five dollar bills with mismatched numbers are less common, and therefore worth more. In fact, there apparently have been no reports in the numismatic press of series 1974 \$5 mismatched bills.

YELLOW COLOR on a piece of U.S. currency may not necessarily mean that the bill was treated with a chemical, writes a perceptive reader from Western Springs.

"I seem to recall that in 1942 and times thereafter, there were yellow-backed U.S. bills being circulated in North Africa and European war theaters," says Milton F. Worcester.

The bills that Worcester refers to were silver certificates printed in denominations of \$1, \$5, and \$10, and were issued for use by U.S. armed forces.